

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/064 W

-----123667 261348Z /64

R 260816Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8604  
INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA  
AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, NI  
SUBJECT: THE PROBLEMS OF CHIEF AWOLOWO

REF: A) LAGOS A-61 B) LAGOS A-20

SUMMARY CHIEF AWOLOWO HAS DENIED THAT THE  
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY'S DECISION TO BAR CORRUPT  
POLITICIANS IN 1979 ELECTION APPLIES TO HIM AND  
HAS CONFIRMED THAT HE WILL RUN FOR PRESIDENT.  
END SUMMARY.

1. CHIEF AWOLOWO HAS ISSUED A PUBLIC STATEMENT  
DENYING THAT A RECENT CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA)  
DECISION BARRING CORRUPT POLITICIANS FROM PUBLIC  
OFFICE APPLIES IN ANY WAY TO HIM. IN DOING SO,  
THE CHIEF CONFIRMED THAT HE PLANS TO RUN FOR PRESI-  
DENT IN 1979. AWOLOWO SAID: "AFTER YESTERDAY'S  
ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DECISION OF THE CONSTITUENT  
ASSEMBLY RELATING TO QUALIFICATIONS OF  
CANDIDATES FOR THE FIRST ELECTIONS,  
THERE HAVE BEEN SPECULATIONS AS TO MY  
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CANDIDATURE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. I WANT  
TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE DECISION OF THE  
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY CANNOT, IN ANY WAY,  
INHIBIT MY ASPIRATION OR AFFECT MY CANDIDATURE.  
AS I HAVE SAID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, I AM, BY THE  
GRACE OF GOD, CONTESTING THE PRESIDENTIAL  
ELECTIONS IN 1979."

2. THE CA ACTION WHICH UPSET CHIEF AWOLOWO TOOK PLACE ON MAY 23 WHEN THE ASSEMBLY VOTED TO MODIFY SECTION 207 OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WHICH DISQUALIFIES FROM PUBLIC OFFICE "ANY PERSON FOUND GUILTY OF CORRUPTION, UNJUST ENRICHMENT OR ABUSE OF OFFICE BY ANY TRIBUNAL OR INQUIRY." THE CA IN APPROVING THE SECTION DECIDED TO MOVE THE OPERATIVE DATE BACK FROM JANUARY 15, 1966, AS CONTAINED IN THE DRAFT, TO OCTOBER 1, 1960, THE DATE OF NIGERIAN INDEPENDENCE.

3. CHIEF AWOLOWO'S PROBLEM AROSE FROM THE FACT THAT HE WAS CITED IN THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COKER COMMISSION WHICH WAS APPOINTED BY PRIME MINISTER TAFAWA BALEWA IN 1962 TO LOOK INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF SEVERAL STATUTORY CORPORATIONS IN THE FORMER WESTERN REGION. THE COMMISSION CLAIMED THAT AWOLOWO (DESPITED THE LACK OF DIRECT EVIDENCE) WAS DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE DIVERSION OF FUNDS INTO THE COFFERS OF HIS ACTION GROUP PARTY. (FYI: WE UNDERSTAND THAT AWOLOWO MAY HAVE RECEIVED A PARDON FROM GOWON, HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT ALLUDE TO IT IN HIS STATEMENT. END FYI)

4. COMMENT: THE ACTION GROUP "CRISIS" OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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1962 IS PERHAPS THE MOST CONVOLUTED AND BYZANTINE CHAPTER IN PRE-1965 NIGERIAN POLITICAL HISTORY. THE SEEDS OF THE PROBLEM WERE PLANTED IN 1959 WHEN AWOLOWO APPOINTED HIS DEPUTY AND RIVAL CHIEF AKINTOLA AS PREMIER IN THE WESTERN REGION AND THEN FAILED TO BECOME FEDERAL PRIME MINISTER. EVENTUALLY, AKINTOLA BEGAN TO DEVELOP A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH TAFAWA BALEWA WHICH LED TO AN OPEN SPLIT IN THE AG WITH FISTICUFFS IN THE WESTERN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN IBADAN AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WESTERN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE AFTERMATH INCLUDED THE COKER COMMISSION AND CHIEF AWOLOWO'S TREASON TRIAL. ON THE QUESTION OF CORRUPTION, MOST HISTORIANS FEEL THAT AWOLOWO'S ACTIVITIES WERE LESS PERNICIOUS THAN AKINTOLA'S BEHAVIOR. HOWEVER, THE POINT IS SOMEWHAT ACADEMIC BECAUSE THE AIM IN THE JUDICIAL INQUEST IN 1962 WAS TO DESTROY AWOLOWO POLITICALLY. WITH THAT IN MIND, WE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CHIEF'S OPPONENTS - YORUBA AND NON-YORUBA - INTENDED IN THE CA TO THROW A CONSTITUTIONAL ROADBLOCK IN THE WAY OF AWOLOWO'S PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS. END COMMENT.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** CORRUPTION, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Document Number:** 1978LAGOS06549  
**Document Source:** CORE  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Reference:** 78 LAGOS A-61, 78 LAGOS A-20  
**Retention:** 0  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, NI, (AWOLOWO, OBAFEMI)  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014